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Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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First regular session of 2019
12 February 2019
Item 1 of the provisional agenda
Organisational matters

Report on the second regular session of 2018, 10 to 11 September 2018

I. Organisational matters

1. The second regular session of 2018 of the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) was held at United Nations Headquarters, New York, from 10 to 11 September 2018.

2. The Executive Board adopted the annotated provisional agenda and workplan for the second regular session (UNW/2018/L.4) and approved the report on its annual session, held from 19 to 20 June 2018 (UNW/2018/5). During the discussion on the proposed provisional agenda and workplan for the first regular session of 2019, to be held on 12 February (see Annex I), the Secretary brought to the Executive Board's attention that there was a request to add two agenda items: 1) the implication for UN-Women of Resolution A/RES/72/279 on repositioning of the United Nations Development System; and 2) the working methods of the Executive Boards. In response, another delegation took the floor to express disagreement on these two proposals on the basis of this request coming at the last minute, leaving no time for consulting with its Capital. This delegation noted that they had previously objected to introducing new recurrent items to Executive Board agendas, which is not helpful bearing in mind the ongoing process on the working methods of the Executive Boards of funds, programmes and entities, and possible consideration of common issues within the Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards. However, the delegation expressed readiness to work through the Bureau on these requests. After deliberation with the President, the Executive Board Secretary noted that the draft agenda of the first regular session 2019 was approved as proposed with no addition, pending further consultations at the next Bureau meeting. During the discussion on the draft annual workplan for 2019, also in preparation for its adoption at the first regular session of 2019, one delegation took the floor to encourage UN-Women to engage with the Board throughout the year through multiple informal briefings through a structured dialogue on financing in conjunction of the first regular session and annual session 2019. The Secretary clarified that the annual workplan only includes informal briefings on official reports and that a schedule of informal briefings in 2019 on the

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dialogue on financing, leading to the formal presentation of the report at the second regular session, will be proposed in due course.

3. The Executive Board adopted three decisions: Decision 2018/5 — Structured Dialogue on Financing: Investing in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment through Financing UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2018-2021; Decision 2018/6 — Joint report on cost recovery; and Decision 2018/7 — Working methods of the Executive Boards, as contained in Annex II of the present report.

II. Opening statements

4. The President of the Executive Board, Ivana Pajević, Deputy Permanent Representative of Montenegro to the United Nations, officially opened the session. She underscored that women's empowerment through access to education, labour markets, and participation in social and political institutions, as well as their protection from violence and discrimination, are all essential for the full eradication of extreme poverty, and attainment of sustainable development and peace.

5. She spoke of the General Assembly Resolution on the Repositioning of the United Nations Development System to deliver on the 2030 Development Agenda (A/RES/72/279), as the foundation for an Organisation that is more efficient, relevant and responsive to emerging challenges of Member States across the globe. She commended UN-Women for leading in the preparation of a background paper presented to the Executive Board, as a preliminary analysis of the implications of General Assembly Resolution 72/279 on UN-Women and expressed support for the vision of the Under-Secretary General/Executive Director on the proposed changes. She looked forward to further analysis in the year 2019 on the effects that the United Nations Development System reform will farther have on UN-Women.

6. The President revealed that in recent discussions of the Executive Board Bureau, members agreed that there is a need to strengthen the participatory approach of the Structured Dialogues on Financing. Bureau Members felt that in the year 2019, more informal meetings should be organised between UN-Women and Member States. The complementarity of these dialogues should be considered in conjunction with similar processes in the Funds and Programmes, and with the proposed "Funding Compact" at the United Nations System level.

7. The President stated that the UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2018-2021 was well-aligned to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the proposed changes contained in Resolution 72/279. She highlighted sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment as issues for the UN system at large and assured the full support of Member States for fair and victim-centred investigations.

8. The President pledged her continued support as a UN-Women advocate, beyond the conclusion of her tenure at the helm of the UN-Women Executive Board, in ensuring that the Entity remained equipped to implement its mandate. She stressed her commitment to strengthened collaboration among the relevant Executive Boards and alignment of their working methods. In closing her statement, the President opined that gender equality and women's empowerment could only be achieved with the full dedication, commitment and strong engagement of everyone in the quest to transform lives for generations to come.

9. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, thanked the President and the Bureau for their dedication and advice throughout the year. She introduced three new Senior Appointments: Director of Communications and Advocacy; Chief of Resource Mobilisation and Donor Relations; and Director of the Office of Independent Evaluation and Internal Audit Services, who was expected to take up her appointment on 1 November 2018.

10. The imminent departure of the Assistant Secretary-General for Policy and Programme, Mr Yannick Glemarec was also announced. The head of the Entity expressed her gratitude for his innovative work, noting that his legacy would be associated with the success of UN-Women's Flagship Programming Initiatives, which have been instrumental in augmenting earmarked funding of critical priority areas.

11. Noting that it was almost one year since the launch of the United Nations Secretary-General's System-Wide Strategy on Gender Parity, the head of the Entity stated that it was the first time in the history of the United Nations that gender parity was achieved within the Secretary General's Senior Management Group and among Resident Coordinators. Interagency coordination and collaboration around the shared goal of gender parity is at an all-time high. She spoke of UN-Women's work through the leveraging of its system-wide mandate, to lead and coordinate the United Nations' gender equality initiatives, by giving examples, such as the Entity's joint work with the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) and the Chiefs Executives Board Human Resources Network on the soon-to-be launched Enabling Environment Guidelines, that presented good practices and recommendations on family-friendly policies, flexible working arrangements, recruitment, talent management and standards of conduct. She acknowledged that much work remained to be done across the entire United Nations System, including the United Nations field missions, particularly within the context of the United Nations reform process and making progress to reach gender parity. In this regard, she called on Member States' to strongly uphold UN-Women's central engagement, in parallel with ensuring that gender parity and women's empowerment was embraced as a shared responsibility.

12. It was emphasised that reaching shared goals would require dedicated financing. Cautioning that the United Nations reform should strengthen rather than minimise the role of UN-Women, she stated: "We have to step it up as UN-Women at all levels. We want to do this with you, including by redirecting resources to prioritise leaving no one behind efforts."

13. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director reiterated her commitment to ensuring that UN-Women continued to focus on supporting all survivors of sexual misconduct. The appointment of an Executive Coordinator of Sexual Harassment was highlighted, as well as the designation of Human Resources focal points to implement the Entity's sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment policies. The head of the Entity called on Member States to support UN-Women's efforts and ensure that actions were taken to respond to victim's experiences of all forms of sexual misconduct.

14. Before concluding her opening statement, she called the Executive Board's attention to the upcoming 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration in the year 2020 and stressed the need for accelerated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

15. Citing the year 2020 as a crucial milestone on the way to 2030, she urged Member States to start preparations for this commemoration in a timely and

collaborative manner with all stakeholders at national and international levels, including engaging with civil society and supporting multi-stakeholder consultations.

III. Structured dialogue on financing

16. The Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Deputy Executive Director of Intergovernmental Support and Strategic Partnerships, opened this agenda item by emphasising the importance of financing not only for UN-Women's effective delivery, but also to ensure that the necessary efforts could be made to close the resource gap that UN-Women currently faces and more broadly within gender equality work, which impacts the lives of women and girls and men and boys across the world, especially those who were most in need. She cited evidence from a World Bank analysis covering 141 countries revealing that realising gender equality and women's empowerment could double the value of the global Gross Domestic Product and accelerate the implementation of the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

17. Financing Gender Equality, however, remained a huge challenge. For example, only 4 per cent of Official Development Assistance (ODA) goes to gender equality work. Compared with the system at large, only 0.2 per cent of Member State United Nations subscriptions go solely to the United Nations entity established to focus exclusively on gender equality and women's empowerment.

18. UN-Women had nevertheless continued to grow in impact and visibility despite these challenges. The Deputy Executive Director stated that UN-Women was one of the fastest growing entities in the United Nations system, albeit from a low base, with an average annual revenue growth rate of 9 per cent per year since 2011. Over the last year, UN-Women achieved its highest revenue level since its establishment in 2010. She acknowledged Member States for their commitment and the Executive Board for its continued guidance and recognition without which this achievement would not have been possible.

19. The Chief of Staff and acting Director of the Strategic Partnerships Division presented the Report on the Structure Dialogue on Financing: Investing in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment through Financing UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2018-2021 (UNW/2018/6). This report supported a continued structured dialogue that engaged the Executive Board on financing UN-Women for the successful implementation of its Strategic Plan 2018-2021, and the achievement of intended outcomes, in support of Member States' gender-responsive realisation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

20. Establishing the context, she outlined that the United Nations was grappling with the question of relevance in a changing environment, which had financial implications for the entire United Nations system in a global political environment that had become less supportive of multilateralism. She underscored the need to ensure the relevance and financial sustainability of the Organisation.

21. While working to ensure full transparency, the financing challenge faced by UN-Women was primarily as to how funds could be translated into results for women and to promote gender equality around the world. The Entity's financing theory of change was that if funded for purpose, UN-Women would help governments deliver transformative outcomes for women and girls and accelerate delivery of the 2030

agenda in ways that leave no one behind. Through the last strategic plan that ended in 2017, an additional 2 billion women and girls live in countries where policy frameworks for women's economic empowerment were strengthened. Over 1.5 billion women and girls are better protected from violence through stronger legal frameworks; and more than 1.48 billion women and girls are benefitting from increased budget allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment.

22. The need for UN-Women is more evident than ever before. The Entity's statistics showed that in leadership, for example, women currently hold 4.8 percent of CEO positions in the 500 top-listed companies and 5.6 percent of women are the highest representatives of countries. At work, women earn only 77 percent of their male counterparts' earnings globally. In homes, women continue to exist in dangerous or unsafe environments, and those between the ages of 15 to 44 are more at risk of rape and domestic violence than cancer, war, car accidents and malaria. Four out of five victims of human trafficking were still girls.

23. With respect to the Structured Dialogue on Financing, and as mentioned earlier, the Entity's revenue increased by 57.5 percent since its establishment in 2011. An all-time high of USD 360.7 million was reached in total revenue in 2017. Additionally, some Member States had already been increasing core and non-core funding, for example, as of last year, the United Arab Emirates has increased its initial contributions 50-fold, and several others who have also seen a steady increase including China, Finland, Germany, Japan and Switzerland.

24. Member States were increasingly engaging in predictable, multi-year core funding agreements, such as Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Iceland, New Zealand and Sweden. Even on non-core resources, there were more commitments to predictable funding, with Sweden ranked the highest in this regard. Sweden stood at USD 54.1 million with all the multi-year framework agreements considered; Canada and Denmark at USD 13.1 and USD 8.7 million, respectively. The European Commission was another example at USD 38.4 million. France, Germany and the United Kingdom were cited as examples of significant contributors to the European Commission. Private Sector examples included BHP Billiton and the Gates Foundation's combined contribution at USD 25.6 million committed in terms of multi-year agreements.

25. However, in regard to the revenue gap it was mentioned that although the Entity had an approved integrated budget of USD 414 million (USD 200 million core and USD 240 non-core), it still experienced a gap in terms of the mobilisation of received funds. This gap was recurrent. Only in 2014 was UN-Women in a position to close it. The reason that predictability of funding was important, rested primarily on the way that programming works.

26. She explained that the Entity embarked on an annual activity-based budgeting exercise to better understand how much all planned activities would cost. In the absence of predictability, the Entity would not be able to fully deliver on its Strategic Plan nor its mandate. Focus would instead be placed on simply managing the workflow which was in a different operating environment. Therefore, a consistent revenue gap did not allow for focus on institutional effectiveness and efficiency.

27. UN-Women invited Member States to join the "Pact" for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (not to be confused with the Secretary-General's Compact for the United Nations Development System Reform) — A Promise to Accelerate Core Funding-Led Transformation within UN-Women — asking for an increase in core funding by 60 million more a year, for at least 2 years, to support the

Entity's efforts to reach stage 3 of its financial maturation model and, therefore, diversify the donor base (currently 97 percent dependent on Member States' contributions).

28. Responding to opening statements and presentation of the agenda item on Structured Dialogue on Financing, several delegations thanked the President for her effective and efficient stewardship of the Executive Board throughout the year. Reaffirming their commitment to the Entity, they also thanked the Head of UN-Women for her comprehensive statement and strong leadership and expressed appreciation for the work of the outgoing Deputy Executive Director, Yannick Glemarec, particularly around the flagship programme initiatives.

29. Many Member States strongly commended UN-Women for leading on the preliminary analysis of the implications of the Repositioning the United Nations Development System (A/RES/72/279) for UN-Women. The paper developed by UN-Women emulated other agencies to undertake similar comprehensive reviews.

30. One delegation mentioned that for the United Nations Development System reform to be effective, common matters across the entities should be identified and addressed by Executive Boards in synergy to the greatest extent possible, leaving room for maneuver on agency-specific matters. The Spotlight Initiative was cited by some speakers as an example of joint work already showing concrete results, such as the collaboration between UN-Women, the United Nations Population Fund and the European Union on ending violence against women and girls.

31. Delegations welcomed efforts made by UN-Women towards organisational reform, they stressed the importance of ensuring that the strategic plan was adapted and implemented in the context of the reform. One speaker believed in the fundamentality of the United Nations Development System including UN-Women, in ensuring stronger system-wide coordination that contributed to the advancement of its activities across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus.

32. One delegation gave an example of UN-Women's presence making a difference, citing the Geneva liaison office as already showing results following its recent opening, by addressing the lack of gender equality consideration in the resolutions of the Human Rights Council.

33. One delegation requested that UN-Women pay attention to the concern of Member States about the representation of international staff and to take effective measures to increase the geographic representation of international staff, especially the ratio of the staff from developing countries.

34. One delegation thanked Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women for accepting the invitation to participate and speak at the opening of the upcoming Second Eurasian Women's Forum entitled "Women for Global Security and Sustainable Development", to be held in Saint Petersburg, the Russian Federation, on 19-21 September 2018.

35. Throughout all statements, the United Nations system coordination and coherence were interwoven as a consistent theme, underscoring the need to enhance system-wide coordination and interagency partnerships, while highlighting UN-Women's coordinating role on gender equality and the empowerment of women and the importance of sticking to respective mandates. One Member State underlined the importance of the normative work of UN-Women stating that the United Nations System repositioning offered an opportunity to ensure the full inclusion of gender

equality in the new Resident Coordinator system and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. UN-Women was urged to adopt a systematic approach at country level, particularly in the development of United Nations Development Assistance Framework, the harmonised operations systems and shared services.

36. Some Member States spoke of the significance and challenges of predictable, flexible resources aligned with Strategic Plan 2018-2021, and announced their Governments' contributions to UN-Women's core resources. Several speakers welcomed UN-Women's efforts to pursue innovative forms of financing, especially through enhanced engagement with the private sector, foundations, private investors and non-traditional partners, to mitigate the risk of a funding deficit and competition between agencies.

37. Emphasising the need for clearer goals for financial reporting, one speaker proposed holding annual donor roundtables, more financing dialogues and informal briefings throughout the year. The purpose of the Structured Dialogue on Financing was to secure financing of the Entity's strategic plan, to gain more flexible resources and to inform as to which type of resources financed the various functions.

38. The Integrated Results and Resources Framework should be used as the "point of departure" for the Structured Dialogue on Financing, stated one delegate. UN-Women was urged to actively engage with Member States and private donors throughout the year and to maintain transparency on the use of resources. A request was made for the Entity to share some more details on its received and expected income, in future reports to the Executive Board, on the Structured Dialogue on Financing. The Entity was also requested to provide more information on its funding gaps at the Executive Board's 2019 second regular session.

39. UN-Women was commended for the increase in its total income, however, it was regrettable that most of this increase in funds was earmarked. Member States urged other delegations to consider increasing their core contributions.

40. UN-Women was requested to include information on resources for multiple years and to consider the possibility of establishing a four-year budget cycle, since it facilitates strategic and long-term planning. Additional questions related to elaboration on expectations and basis thereon for an increase in future income. One delegation opined that stronger focus should be given to core resources, a challenge that other agencies face as well. Efforts should continue to make the results of core resources more attractive to donors.

41. Some delegations highlighted the importance of multi-year donation modalities for predictable and flexible resources, and one speaker placed focus on the need to expand contributions beyond the top ten, stating that it was critical for UN-Women to strengthen donor engagement through enhancing the visibility of operational activities results to the wider public.

42. Many speakers took the opportunity to welcome the strong statement made by the Head of the Entity on sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, reiterating their support for UN-Women's initiatives and actions to prevent the occurrence of such cases in the future, in addition to its reinforcement of the principle of accountability and zero tolerance. They urged UN-Women to lead on improving the United Nations Organisation's policy in this regard.

IV. Joint report on cost recovery

43. The Director of the Division of Management and Administration submitted the joint report on cost recovery to the Executive Board, which responded to two sets of requests from the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Children's Fund and UN-Women. The report was jointly prepared by the four entities and subjected to extensive consultations with the Executive Boards.

44. The report proposed two alternatives to respond to the 2013 decisions of the respective Executive Boards. It included evidence-based information on the application of the decisions related to the cost recovery policy, as well as the challenges that the agencies faced during the 2014-2017 period. It also addressed issues of strategic significance which could influence the level of cost recovery in the near term, as well as the traditional application of indirect cost recovery formulas in the longer term, such as the ongoing reform of the United Nations Development System and the emerging business opportunities.

45. The ability to fully recover both direct and indirect costs emanating from 'non-core' or 'other' contributions is key to financial sustainability and to minimising cross-subsidisation between 'regular' and 'other' resources. Being fully behind the United Nations reforms, including harmonisation and simplification of processes, UN-Women is strongly in favour of a harmonised approach to cost recovery including a harmonised cost recovery methodology and harmonised cost recovery rates. The Director stated that this was a key impetus for joint programming and cost-effective work at the country level.

46. Several Member States responded in a joint statement thanking the entities for the joint report and past efforts in harmonising their cost recovery policies, while recognising that maintaining a harmonised framework was quite challenging. Member States have considered the various options and implications, guided by the overarching principles of: 1) continuing the harmonised approach across agencies; 2) maximising the use of regular resources for programmatic activities that achieve concrete development results; 3) minimising the cross-subsidisation from core resources which continue to be the bedrock of operational activities for development; 4) allowing for cost efficiency and competitiveness of the agencies; and transparency on the details of the framework as well as its implications.

47. While considering the different mandates of the entities, institutional structures and business models of the various entities Member States concluded that the current harmonised cost recovery framework was currently the most adequate option. They proposed a few concrete steps to further improve the existing cost recovery framework which included: 1) Further harmonisation of current cost classification categories in order for a more transparent and standardised framework; 2) With respect to exemptions from the harmonised cost recovery rates, loopholes should be closed — and the number of granted waivers should be drastically reduced; 3) Based on the outcome of the review, it was proposed that the existing cost recovery rates be maintained. Member States recalled General Assembly resolution 72/279 that welcomed the Secretary General's commitment to further harmonisation of cost recovery by individual United Nations Development System entities.

V. Evaluation: meta-analysis of evaluations managed by UN-Women in 2017

48. The Director ad interim of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services Office presented the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the meta-analysis of the evaluations managed by UN-Women in 2017.

49. The overarching conclusion was that UN-Women interventions were overall relevant, efficient, and effective, with most achieving the expected results across thematic areas. Nonetheless, securing multi-year funding, scaling up of high impact, innovative approaches and strengthening result-based management systems that go beyond capturing immediate outputs to tracking outcomes, need to be further improved.

50. UN-Women interventions were found to be highly relevant to normative frameworks, successful at meeting the needs of women at the national level and demonstrated good adaptive capacity. Although UN-Women projects were well designed, most evaluations found the need for more intensive situation analyses.

51. Interventions at all levels were effective, with most achieving the expected results with limited resources. Strategic partnerships, UN joint programming and openness to innovation have contributed to some of the most effective interventions.

52. Performance was positive in terms of the efficiency of implementation, management arrangements, and financial planning. However, integration of monitoring, financial and reporting systems should be improved to fully support real-time programme management and effective partnership governance.

53. Results-based management systems were in place, and improved, but required continuous investment and further strengthening. Despite limited evidence of explicit exit-planning in UN-Women interventions, many findings on sustainability indicated that the benefits of interventions were likely to continue due to consistent development of national and local institutional capacity.

54. The UN-Women management perspective was presented by the Deputy Executive Director, Policy and Programme, outlining responses to each recommendation as outlined in the report before the Executive Board.

55. Speakers who took the floor thanked UN-Women for the meta-analysis and appreciated the responses from the management. They stressed the importance of the implementation of the recommendations.

56. Considering the anticipated growth of humanitarian financing, UN-Women should focus on its role in coordinating the United Nations system on gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN-Women was urged to focus on normative work and to strengthen and support the humanitarian system on issues related to its mandate within existing structures. A delegation supported the recommendation that UN-Women should place emphasis on gender markers being absorbed and used in all humanitarian projects.

57. One speaker noted with concern the finding regarding gaps in the capacity to use evidence and data to provide timely feedback for decision-making and learning. Reporting on strategic partnerships and networks was highlighted as needing further

clarification, since it was opined that the Entity's added-value was not clearly articulated.

VI. Working methods

58. Within its Decision 2018/1, the Executive Board encouraged the secretariat of the Executive Board of UN-Women to work together with the secretariats of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme to produce a joint response to the joint meeting of the Executive Boards segment on working methods by no later than four weeks before the second regular session 2018, allowing for a consultation process among Member States ahead of that session of 2018.

59. Following the Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards held on 1 June 2018 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, a "President's Summary" recorded the outcome of the session discussions on the working methods, drawing some conclusions on issues where there was a clear convergence. The President's Summary constitutes a core of common issues on working methods that could potentially form a basis for a roadmap for taking the recommendations aimed at improving the working methods of the Executive Boards forward. Convergence of views were noted in the following areas: Bureaux; Sessions; Participation; Field visits; and Joint meeting of the Executive Boards. The Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards could become an opportunity to discuss issues of common interest to all the Boards, including, inter alia, reports on the status of implementation of the common chapter of the respective strategic plans; audit, ethics and evaluation; gender strategy; and sexual exploitation and abuse and on sexual harassment.

VII. Field visits

A. Joint field visit to Uganda by members of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP, 30 April to 4 May 2018

60. The delegation of 25 Board members was led by the Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the United Nations and President of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund and United Nations Office for Project Services. The visit aimed to assess the effectiveness of the United Nations in Uganda with regard to: (a) supporting delivery of national development priorities, including alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and (b) partnerships and collaboration through "delivering as one" and working with others, including national and local governments, beneficiaries, Member States, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society, the private sector and other development actors.

B. Field visit of the UN-Women Executive Board Bureau to Malawi

61. The annual UN-Women field visit took place in Malawi from 5 to 10 May 2018. This field visit was mandated by Executive Board Decision 2017/8. The delegation was led by the President of the Executive Board, accompanied by the four Vice-Presidents of the UN-Women Executive Board and two Executive Board Member States representatives from Western Europe and the Others Group.

62. The purpose of the visit was to observe how UN-Women Malawi fulfils the mandate of UN-Women to support nationally identified development priorities and contributes to the implementation of the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

63. The objective was also to understand how UN-Women works collaboratively with the members of the United Nations Country Team in Malawi to support and contribute to the implementation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework to Malawi's national development priorities and plans and to the 2030 Development Agenda.

64. The delegation expressed its gratitude to the Government of Malawi for their hospitality, for facilitating the visit and for the opportunity to engage in fruitful discussion on gender equality and women's empowerment with the President of the Republic of Malawi. The delegation also met with several Ministers and high-level Government representatives.

VIII. Special briefing

A. Preliminary analysis of the financial and other implications of General Assembly Resolution 72/279 for UN-Women

65. The Under Secretary-General/Executive Director gave the Executive Board and overview of the report that responded to Executive Board Decision 2018/1, requesting UN-Women to present a preliminary analysis of the financial and other implications of General Assembly Resolution 72/279 for UN-Women to the Executive Board at its second regular session in 2018.

66. The report touched on the implications within the context of the new generation of United Nations Country Teams, more specifically on (i) The United Nations Development Assistance Framework; (ii) the United Nations Country Teams Configuration; (iii) Knowledge, data, evidence and capacity development; and (iv) Common Business Operations.

67. The report also proposed several immediate actions to undertake at the Headquarters, so as to make the Entity nimbler and more effective in delivering its mandate. The Executive Director noted that UN-Women will continue to engage in processes led by the Secretary-General to implement Resolution 72/279, with the transition team under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General.

68. UN-Women will provide further updates to the Executive Board in 2019 as additional elements for the implementation of Resolution 72/279, as well as to ensure their financial and other implications become clearer. There was an overwhelming appreciation by Member States for the transparency and effectiveness of UN-Women in presenting such a clear and concise assessment report.

B. Operational response at the country level

69. The UN-Women Representative, Afghanistan, made a presentation on the work of UN-Women to support the Government, civil society and the people of Afghanistan on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. She elaborated on the key directions of UN-Women's country level operational response to make maximum impact by adopting strategic areas of engagement. She stated that the country was at a critical juncture, with elections scheduled for October 2018 bringing with it the emergent possibility of peace after 17 years of war.

70. Despite the challenges faced by the country, the UN-Women Representative saw enormous opportunities and potential to scale up work with the Government and civil society to achieve concrete impact for the benefit of women and girls. She outlined the country strategy to capitalise on the work already done and to expand successful approaches, building on the leadership of the Government and the capacity of civil society.

71. UN-Women is currently seeking financing for its newly developed four-year strategy which benefited from wide consultation. UN-Women has anchored its strategic focus in Afghanistan on key emerging issues, and its work was fully aligned and in support of the One UN Strategy Paper for Afghanistan 2018-2022 and supports the implementation of Afghanistan's National Peace and Development Framework (2017-2021), including supporting the implementation of relevant National Priority Programmes. Illustrating concrete examples of initiatives and activities on the ground, she expounded on the Entity's four strategic priority areas. Her presentation concluded with a video depicting services for women survivors of violence, highlighting a worker from one of the women's shelters supported by UN-Women, as well as an interview with a survivor of violence who benefited from the services of the shelter, speaking about her experiences and her hopes for the future.

72. The Deputy Permanent Representative of the Government of Afghanistan to the United Nations thanked the Executive Board for the opportunity to respond. He applauded the efforts of UN-Women in Afghanistan and outlined key achievements at the national level which he described as unprecedented.

73. He looked forward to further strengthening collaboration with the Entity at its Headquarters in New York and, to that end, proposed to convene meetings every 6 months to share on the development and implementation of activities on the ground.

74. Delegations who took the floor commended the UN-Women's Representative for the presentation as well as the openness with which the consultative process was conducted in the development of the strategy. One speaker supported the main strategic areas and agreed with the emphasis placed on the convening and coordinating role of the Entity, rather than that of an implementing agency. Partnerships with non-traditional actors, including faith-based organisations were welcomed. The delegate also applauded the recommended shift in focus of the regional offices, citing the UN-Women Regional Office in Bangkok as an excellent case in point, having played a crucial role in strengthening the Afghanistan country office. It was opined that in the Afghanistan context, it was important to highlight the importance of gender mainstreaming and of including men and boys in the analysis of limitations and possibilities.

IX. Closing

75. The Head of UN-Women thanked the President for her leadership during the session as well as the Vice Presidents of the Executive Board and to the entire Bureau for their work. She expressed her appreciation for the insightful remarks and statements of Member States throughout the session, which enabled a rich dialogue and an exchange of views on several key agenda items.

76. She noted two main themes that emerged during discussions: the first one is the importance of strengthening UN-wide coordination, delivering as one mechanisms, and inter-agency coordination in all aspects of the UN-Women mandate and not only programming; Second, about the financing of UN-Women, she thanked Japan, Sweden, Switzerland and China for announcing their contributions.

77. The outgoing Deputy Executive Director of Policy and Programme also took the floor to thank Member States for their good wishes.

78. The President of the Board thanked him for his excellent leadership, the UN-Women Executive Board Secretary and his team, and entire UN-Women management for their engagement and frank interaction with Member States. She noted the openness with which the Entity facilitated discussions with Member States, particularly the Structured Dialogue on Financing and the preliminary analysis on implications of General Assembly Resolution 72/279. She stated that UN-Women was strategically positioned to ensure that gender equality was a key component in the UN-reform process. She thanked the Vice-Presidents of the Executive Board for their work and support and all the Members and Observers for their constructive participation, and declared the session officially closed.

Annex I

Provisional agenda and workplan for the first regular session 13 February 2018

Note by the Executive Board secretariat

Provisional agenda

1. Organisational matters
2. Audit matters
3. Other matters

Provisional workplan

Day	*Time*	*Item*	*Subject*
Tuesday, 12 February	10 a.m. – 1 p.m.		Opening of the session
			• Statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women
		1	Organisational matters
			• Adoption of the annotated provisional agenda and workplan of the first regular session of 2019
			• Adoption of the report on the second regular session of 2018
			Briefing on the operational response at country level: Iraq
		2	Audit matters
			• Report of the Board of Auditors on the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2017
			• Management response
	3 p.m. – 6 p.m.		• Briefing on UN-Women's knowledge management
			• Oral update on the Global Evaluation Strategy, 2018-2021
		3	• Other matters
		1	• Organisational matters
			• Approval of the provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session of 2019
			Adoption of the annual workplan 2019
			• Closing of the session

- Statements by the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women and the President of the Executive Board

Annex II

Decision 2018/5 — Structured Dialogue on Financing: Investing in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment through Financing UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2018-2021

The Executive Board,

1. *Takes note of* the 2018 report on Structured Dialogue on Financing: Investing in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment through Financing UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2018-2021, and encourages UN-Women to continue engaging in a structured dialogue with Member States throughout the year, with a view of assessing the level of funding it receives, and funding gaps, as well as the predictability, flexibility and alignment of financial resources provided for the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, without prejudging the outcomes of the Secretary-General's funding compact;

2. *Recognises* the efforts of UN-Women on resource mobilisation and that sufficient regular resources are the bedrock to fully and effectively deliver on the implementation of UN-Women's Strategic Plan, 2018-2021; notes that regular resources enable UN-Women to plan ahead, be responsive and strategic; strengthen their oversight functions (evaluation, audit, and investigation) and accountability; contribute to strengthening UN system coherence and coordination; and leverage other resources to advance gender equality and women's empowerment;

3. *Requests* UN-Women to continue its efforts to improve its efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability and in this regard to continue to provide information on its programme activities, within the proceedings of the Executive Board;

4. *Recognises* that the leadership of Member States in supporting UN-Women and their deepened engagement with and further investment in gender equality and women's empowerment, with guidance of the Executive Board, is essential for the successful implementation of UN-Women's Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, and in this regard notes with appreciation the increasing number of contributors to UN-Women; takes note of the status of regular resources revenue, and urges countries in a position to do so, to increase their voluntary contributions to UN-Women, particularly its core resources, preferably paid early in the year and/or in a timely manner, and, if possible, through multiyear pledges;

5. *Encourages* countries, in a position to do so, to provide timely and flexible Other Resources (earmarked) aligned with the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021;

6. *Requests* UN-Women to continue improving the format and content of the report on Structured Dialogue on Financing, in order to further improve the quality of the Structured Dialogue on Financing, including by providing an overview of the funding in relation to the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021, taking into account both regular and other resources;

7. *Encourages* UN-Women to continue working jointly with UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF to improve collaboration on structured funding dialogues;

8. *Welcomes* the commitment of UN-Women, in close collaboration with the Secretary-General's transition team and other programmes, funds and specialised agencies, to implement General Assembly Resolution 72/279 of 31 May 2018 on repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system; also

welcomes the updates provided with preliminary analysis of the financial and other implications of the resolution and requests UN-Women to continue to engage with the Executive Board in this regard, providing regular updates as from 2019;

9. *Recalls* Executive Board Decision 2018/1 on the Annual Report of the Under Secretary-General/Executive Director on the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, and requests UN-Women to double its contribution to the existing United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) cost-sharing arrangement, in accordance with General Assembly Resolution 72/279, to deposit its 2019 contribution as soon as possible, taking into account the Secretary-General's implementation plan, in order to operationalise the new resident coordinator system from 1 January 2019, and to report on progress in this regard to the Executive Board at the annual session 2019;

10. *Requests* that UN-Women, as part of the UNSDG, collaborate with the Secretary-General's transition team to support the establishment of a system-wide approach to implementing all the funding modalities set out in General Assembly Resolution 72/279, including the levy, and to report to the Executive Board at the first regular session 2019;

11. *Requests* that UN-Women present clear, transparent information on its contribution to resident coordinator funding modalities to the Executive Board at the annual session 2019;

12. *Calls on* UN-Women to review its planning, financing and results reporting processes to ensure effective joint collaboration in the context of the revitalised UNDAF, and to provide an update at the next session of the Executive Board on required adjustments;

13. *Request* UN-Women to regularly update the Executive Board on the ways it supports the work of the Resident Coordinators, and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, on matters related to gender equality and the empowerment of women, in accordance with its mandate, as well as on the implications of the new generation of UN country teams, as mandated by General Assembly Resolution 72/279, on its regional architecture and country set up.

Decision 2018/6 — Joint report on cost recovery

The Executive Board,

1. *Recalls* Executive Board Decision 2013/2, which endorsed the current harmonised cost recovery policy and in this regard recognises and welcomes the efforts of UN-Women, together with UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF in implementing the policy, and in which the Executive Board directed the Entity to implement the cost recovery policy and ensure full cost recovery proportionally from regular and other resources funding sources, and provide incentives to increase regular resources funding;

2. *Recalls* Executive Board Decision 2017/2;

3. *Takes note of* the Joint UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women report on cost recovery (DP/FPA-ICEF-UNW/2018/1) and the two proposals for the recovery of indirect costs presented therein;

4. *Notes* paragraph 28 (d) of General Assembly Resolution 72/279, which calls for a further harmonisation of cost recovery by individual United Nations development system entities, and in this regard, commends UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women for their harmonised cost recovery framework and encourages them to work with other entities of the United Nations development system, after due consideration by their respective governing bodies, to adopt a harmonised cost recovery framework;

5. *Requests* UN-Women, together with UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, to jointly review existing cost definitions and classifications of activities and associated costs, with a view to further harmonise their approaches by determining common definitions of cost categories and corresponding activities and functions at a granular level, while taking into account the different business models of the individual entities, which allows for a full understanding of each categories' composition, options for possible alignment of similar functions to the same cost classifications across entities, and continues to provide a basis for comparisons among entities, as well as alignment with their strategic plans, to be presented to the Executive Board for decision at its second regular session in 2019;

6. *Reaffirms* in this regard the current harmonised cost recovery policy and requests UN-Women, together with UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, to present a preliminary comprehensive proposal on the cost recovery policy for consideration by the Executive Board at its first regular session in 2020, with a view to present a final comprehensive proposal for decision of the Executive Board at its second regular session in 2020;

7. *Requests* UN-Women, together with UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, to reduce the granting of waivers lowering the agreed cost recovery rates, and to provide an update on the steps taken in this regard, including on the application of waivers across their organisations, to the Executive Board at its annual session in 2019;

8. *Requests* UN-Women, together with UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, to review in a comprehensive manner, cost recovery rates as part of the comprehensive proposal;

9. *Requests* UN-Women, together with UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, to present an assessment of the reasons why full cost recovery is not currently being achieved, as part of the comprehensive proposal.

Decision 2018/7 — Working methods of the Executive Boards

The Executive Board,

1. *Reaffirms* the rules of procedure of the Executive Board of UN-Women;

2. *Takes note* of the joint response prepared by the secretariats of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund/United Nations Office for Project Services, the United Nations Children's Fund, and the World Food Programme to their respective second regular sessions 2018;

3. *Requests* the UN-Women Executive Board Secretariat to circulate draft decisions at least two weeks prior to the session so that the draft decisions are available at the pre-session, and strongly encourages the President to appoint, at that time, the facilitators for the respective draft decisions, in full respect to equitable regional representation, and in this regard strongly encourages Member States to provide their comments on draft decisions, if possible, prior to the first informal consultations, with a view to starting informal consultations on the draft decisions a working day in advance of the session;

4. *Requests* UN-Women and the Members of its Executive Board to make efforts to start all formal and informal meetings on time and to plan them during United Nations working hours and avoid parallel consultations to better facilitate the effective and constructive participation of all Member States in the work of the Executive Boards;

5. *Also requests* the UN-Women Executive Board Secretariat to identify a set of common agenda items, together with UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UNICEF, and WFP, with a view to harmonising the consideration of those agenda items with these agencies, beginning from the first regular session 2019 onwards;

6. *Further requests* the UN-Women Executive Board Secretariat to develop, in consultation with UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, and UNICEF, a joint online calendar of all Board meetings, to be updated in real time and made available to the Executive Board;

7. *Requests* UN-Women management to provide a written response to questions raised at informal consultations on the reports (informal briefings), upon request by Member States, before the start of the following formal session;

8. *Requests* UN-Women to continue to enhance documentation in order to make it more strategic and analytical, and to include best practices, actions being taken to address lessons learned, challenges and risks, building on the interactions with the Board, as appropriate;

9. *Requests* UN-Women to further enhance accessibility and ensure that Executive Board documents' file names are clearly spelled out and indicate the documents' content, that these documents can be downloaded in their entirety by agency, and that they include full text searchability;

10. *Requests* UN-Women to engage with the Executive Board, and with UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UNICEF, and WFP, on the efficient and effective implementation of the guidelines for Executive Board field visits and reporting requirements;

11. *Requests* UN-Women and its Bureau to give due consideration to gender balance in panels for all meetings;

12. *Requests* the Bureau of UN-Women, in collaboration with the Bureaux of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, and WFP, to launch a joint consultative process with Member States starting at the first regular session 2019, with a view to examining the efficiency and quality of its current sessions, as well as the functions of the joint meeting of the Boards, building on the joint response prepared by the secretariats.